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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 147332

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/22/2017
TAGS: [IZ](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO SARG "DEAL" RE DHS REFUGEE
RESETTLEMENT INTERVIEWS

REF: DAMASCUS 1032

Classified By: NEA A/S DAVID WELCH FOR REASONS 1.4 B and D

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. See paras 2-4.

[1](#)2. (C) Department appreciates Post's engagement with the SARG on the important subject of allowing resumption of DHS/USCIS interviews of Iraqi refugees in Syria. The "deal" proposed by the SARG is clearly unacceptable and we find it hard to believe that it is serious. While we have been generous with humanitarian assistance, and have urged others to do so, we will not make any assurances to the Asad government to solicit funds on its behalf. Likewise, we will not alter our standard refugee procedures at Syrian behest. Nevertheless, the opportunity to get DHS adjudicators into Syria is something we should continue to pursue. Department requests that Charge present an appropriate Diplomatic Note confirming agreement that the Foley/Scialabba visit will take place October 29-31. Set forth below in para 4 are the names of the persons who will be visiting Syria.

[1](#)3. (C) Department also requests that Charge deliver the following points:

-- The U.S. appreciates Syria's willingness to receive the Foley/Scialabba delegation to discuss Iraqi humanitarian issues and to engage on the issue of resumption of DHS circuit rides.

-- Regarding the request that the U.S. seek increased international assistance to Syria by encouraging other countries to increase their donations (preferably directly to the Syrian government): The USG has worked and will continue to work with Gulf and European countries to encourage them to respond generously to UN appeals targeting Iraqi refugees. Ambassador Foley intends to continue the USG's diplomatic effort to increase contributions to regional humanitarian assistance efforts by meeting with UN and donor country officials in Geneva following his trip to the region.

-- It should be noted that the USG has been the largest international donor to humanitarian assistance programs for displaced Iraqis to date. In 2007, the USG provided almost \$200 million to the UN, other international organizations and NGO programs assisting displaced Iraqis. A significant portion of our assistance has reached Iraqi refugees in Syria: \$67 million was contributed to UN and UNHCR programs implemented in countries hosting displaced Iraqis, including

Syria; \$4 million went to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent appeal which supports the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and Jordanian Red Crescent Societies to implement health programs on behalf of displaced Iraqis; and more than \$8 million went to six NGOs in Syria to expand health and education services to vulnerable Iraqis and Syrians.

-- Regarding the SARG request that Government of Iraq, Government of Syria and UNHCR representatives be present at the DHS interview: It is contrary to international norms on refugee processing, as well as to DHS policy and procedure, to allow officials of other governments at the DHS adjudication. As a matter of policy and practice, the DHS refugee adjudication is designed to protect the individual's confidentiality, and there is no historical precedent for

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observation of individual DHS interviews by officials of either the host government or of the government of the individual's country of origin. Nor are we aware of other countries permitting a third country presence during their refugee interviews in Syria or anywhere else. We understand that UNHCR has informed the SARG that such government observation of UNHCR interviews is also prohibited by its own policy on conducting refugee status determinations.

-- The U.S. reiterates its commitment to UNHCR vulnerability criteria. As the SARG may know, UNHCR has established eleven profiles of Iraqi refugees who will be prioritized for resettlement submission. All DHS interviews in Syria are based on a referral from UNHCR according to one of the eleven criteria. Syria should address concerns about transparency to UNHCR. We are only interviewing candidates referred to us by UNHCR. If Syria wants to verify this fact, we believe it can confirm an individual's status with UNHCR at the time of the exit permit application.

End Points.

14. (C) The U.S. delegation will consist of Ambassador James Foley, Lori Scialabba, Terry Rusch, June Tancredi, Mary Doetsch, and Norm Hastings. The DHS adjudicators are Brett Lassen, Leila Bongato, Steve Lindsay and David Marchick.
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